

10 Principles of Good Practice for City Councils

Principle 1 The Council has a very clear sense of the Strategic Direction for the city organization. They not only know the Strategic Direction, they continuously monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the organization against the Council mandated Strategic Direction. They ask continually whether their policies are consistent with the agreed upon strategic direction and whether the course of action being pursued will permit them to arrive at the strategic objectives of the Council.

Principle 2 The Council has a clear sense of its role and function in the community and the city organization. They understand their role in making and monitoring policy. The Council focuses on "making policy" not "doing policy". The Council monitors and evaluates expected outcomes while continually posing the question Why? rather than What?

✓ **Principle 3** The Council has in place clear written policies which vest authority in the entire Council not blocks or factions. No one individual Council member speaks for the Council. The Council speaks with one voice on matters of importance while respecting each Council member's need to disagree on various issues. Once the *will* of the Council has been expressed, each individual member supports the will of the Council to the best of his/her ability.

✓ **Principle 4** The Council views itself as a *Team* and understands its role as a *Team* in the broader context of city government and the community. Council members respect each other and value the diversity of opinions and perspectives each member brings to the Council. They all insure every Council member is actively involved in the work and decisionmaking of the Council as a valued team member.

Principle 5 The Council establishes clear lines of authority and accountability to run the business of city government. It insures it has a highly competent professional manager and staff to do the work required to implement its policies. The City Manager is given clear direction through its policy setting process and holds him/her accountable for results. Individual Council members refrain from giving personal direction to staff on any matters no matter how innocent it appears on the surface.

✓ **Principle 6** The Council monitors and evaluates its own performance as a Team to insure compliance with its own rules of conduct and expectations. The Council recognizes its effectiveness in achieving its strategic objectives can be impacted by its own actions or inactions. It examines itself to insure it fulfills its role of leading the organization in its agreed upon strategic direction.

Principle 7 The Council has a well thought out and agreed upon policy agenda to move the organization towards its strategic objectives. The Council recognizes its primary function is to set, monitor, and evaluate policy and therefore is deliberate in creating an agenda for itself and the organization to follow.

Principle 8 The Council understands its responsibility to its stakeholders and holds itself accountable to the entire community of stakeholders for its work and results. They take a big picture perspective with regard to community interest and concerns.

Principle 9 The City Council finds creative ways to insure citizen involvement but never allow citizen input to substitute for the Council's need to make decisions which are in the best interest of the organization and the Council's strategic direction.

Principle 10 The Council advocates and supports a continuous learning environment in the city organization seeking to find creative solutions to problems to advance its strategic agenda.